

# **RABINDRANATH TAGORE AS AN EDUCATIONIST**

**A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO  
The Meerut University, Meerut  
in part-fulfilment of its M. Ed. Degree Course  
for the Academic Session**

**1986**

**By :**  
**Km. RADHIKA PANDEY**  
M. Sc , B. Ed.  
Roll No. F562004  
ENROLMENT NO. M7921485

**Supervisor**  
**Smt. MANJU AGARWAL**  
M. A., M. Ed., M. Phil.

**Education Department  
N. A. S. COLLEGE, MEERUT.**



## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

My warm thanks are due to the large number of those who have helped to produce much of the material for this thesis. To name them individually would make too formidable to list and I trust they will accept this acknowledgement of my appreciation.

There are some, however to whom I owe a special debt of gratitude.

To Smt. Manju Agrawal, Education Department of N.A.S. College for her generous hospitality and kindness in giving me so much of her time for patiently enduring long interrogation and for putting me right on various matters.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the advice and assistance which my Head of the Department Mrs. Savitri Singh, Education Department, N.A.S.College, Meerut have extended to me at all time.

Thanks are also due to Dr. K.G.Sharma, Reader, Institute of Advance Studies, Meerut University, Meerut for his valuable help rendered to investigator in collecting matter related with the topic.

With deep feeling of gratitudes and devotion, I wish to express my indebtedness to Dr. R.P.Bhatnagar and Dr. R.A.Sharma of Education Department, Meerut University, Meerut whose inspirations were the constant source of encouragement to me.

Contd...2/-



Finally, I acknowledge with thanks to Dr. G.S.Sharma, Dr. B.D.Sharma, Dr. (Smt.) S.K.Singh, Prof. C.S.Sharma and Prof. A.K.Sharma of Education Department, N.A.S. College, Meerut for their sincere help.

( Km. RADHIKA PANDEY )





D E C L A R A T I O N

I hereby declare that the present work entitled "Rabindranath Tagore as an educationist" presented as Dissertation in part fulfilment of M.Ed. Degree is wholly carried out by me and to the best of my knowledge, has not been submitted previously.

Dated: 22.9.86

*R. Pandey*  
( KM. RADHIKA PANDEY )





FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
N.A.S.COLLEGE,  
MEERUT.

To,

The Registrar,  
Meerut University,  
M e e r u t.

Subject : CERTIFICATE OF THE SUPERVISOR.

Esteemed Sir,

It is certified that Km. Radhika Pandey has worked under my guidance for her dissertation "RABINDRANATH TAGORE AS AN EDUCATIONIST" which is being submitted in the part-fulfilment of her M.Ed. Examination of Meerut University, 1986. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the whole work is original.

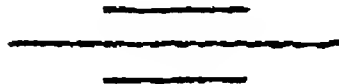
Dated: 29.9.86

*Manju Agrawal*  
( SMT. MANJU AGRAWAL )  
M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.  
Supervisor



\* TABLE OF CONTENTS \*

			Pages
CHAPTER	I	INTRODUCTION	1 - 7
CHAPTER	II	EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF TAGORE	8 - 21
CHAPTER	III	MEANS OF EDUCATION	22-- 27
CHAPTER	IV	TAGORE'S CONCEPT OF RELIGION OF MAN	28 - 35
CHAPTER	V	MAN AND NATURE	36 - 46
CHAPTER	VI	GENERAL PLAN OF AN IDEAL EDUCATION SYSTEM	47 - 57
CHAPTER	VII	AGREAT MAN IN EDUCATION	58 - 65
CHAPTER	VIII	CONCLUSION	66 - 77





CHAPTER IINTRODUCTIONThe Life Sketch of Rabindranath Tagore

Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore, the son of the famous religious reformer Maharshi Devandranath was not only a great poet, philosopher, social reformer but also a great educationist. Devandranath Tagore was popularly known as 'Maharshi', due to his wide learning and saintly living and to Maharshi, Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta at Jorasanko house of the Tagore's at 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane (at present known as 'Maharsi Bhawan') on Tuesday, 6 May, 1861. Tagore was a member of a very crowded family. Rabi as he was known in the family was the fourteenth child of his parents. He had thirteen elder brother and sisters.

His grand father, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore was a friend of the great Indian religions reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy and was one of the first Indians to travel to Europe where he was received with honour at the courts of both France and England.

Rabindranath had very little attention from his mother due to two reasons. Firstly, she was awfully busy with the family affairs and secondly, she died when he was very young. He lost his mother in 1875, a dear lady who remained oblivious of her son's existence in the midst of her pre-occupations. She once called Rabindranath her 'dark boy'.



### Education :-

At the age of five Rabindranath Tagore started learning the alphabets along with elder brothers. At the age of nine years school teaching was reinforced at home under private tutors. This was done because he was dis-satisfied with the schools atmosphere due to unrealistic and dull atmosphere of the school.

At the age of ten he was admitted to Bengal Academy an Anglo Indian School, where English was used as the medium of instruction. As Rabindranath Tagore was never in favour of a foregin language being taken as the medium of instruction. This school because still more unbearable for him.

At the age of twelve he took extensive tours of Northern India with his father. It was at this age that the sacred thread was given to him. From his father he took lesson in english and Sanskrit. In the night he studied about the position of stars, planets and moons (astronomy) also from his father. He left St. Xavier's school at the age of fourteen. Then the last desperate effort for his college education was made in 1878 when he sailed for England and went to school at Brighton.

He studied English Literature with Prof. Morley for sometime and in 1880 at the age of nineteen without completing any course of study he came back to India.

In Bombay for some time he lived with the anglicised family of a Marathi Physician and took lessons in spoken english from Anna, the doctor's daughter, whom he named Nalini and to





whom he later addressed a number of poems.

And thus ended the formal educational career of the great educationist not only of our country but of the world, without his having obtained any formal diploma, certificate or degree.

Rabindranath Tagore did not write a single line of english until he was fifty. Some times afterwards he translated 'Gintngali' into English which brought him noble prize and world wide recognition. In the same year Calcutta University adored him with the degree of Doctor of Literature. In 1915, the Indian Government endowed him with Knight-hood which he returned after the notorious Jalyanwala Bagh massaere to express his emotion of anger at the episode. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore travelled widely throughout the world. He went to Japan, Europe and U.S.A. on 22nd September 1921, he established the famous Vishwa Bharti, a place of learning of Indian philosophy, arts and Literature of the whole world. The aim of this University was to bring about a senthesis of the East and West. For the development of Vishwa-Bharti, he toiled ceaselessly and untiringly for 20 years and established this seat of world wide reputation on stable foundations.

The Tagore family have contributed greatly to the cultural life of Bengal and the debt that Bengal owes to them is immeasurable. Poet's, artists and musicians have come from this family, the greatest of them being Rabindranath Tagore, the youngest of a number of gifted brothers and sisters.



Rabindranath Tagore breathed his last on Thursday 7, August, 1941. He was 80 years, three months at the time of his death which occurred in his ancestral home in Calcutta, 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane.

### HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Tagore had full confidence in Supreme Man and regarded that Supreme Man as the Supreme Power of the Universe. According to Rabindranath Tagore Supreme Man is the symbol of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram. He imbibed the idealistic philosophy of life and adopted the highest ideals of truth, beauty and goodness as the chief aims of education to be achieved by all human beings. As an idealist, Tagore believed in the absolute and immortal existence of God, but he believed in God as a Super man and accepted this world as his best creation. In fact, Tagore was a follower of 'Monoism'. As such he writes - "We should try to search for God and thus realise that truth which will liberate us from material bonds of existence and which is capable to illuminate the whole world with his divine light."

Tagore had confidence in man and can be called a high class humanist. To quote Dr. M.P.Verma, "Tagore was a humanist." Tagore was prophet of love, fellowship, and co-operation. He gave to the organised man the gospel of unity and harmony. His humanism was nurtured on spiritual foundations. Man has to be interpreted in the perspective of the eternal. The supreme person dwells in the human personality-Antaryamin. Tagore believed in God and hence in Man. The individual human selves are the replicas of the creative super-spirit. Man is only a unique modelisation of God. Man represents the creator. The human body is the sacred laboratory for God's creative experimentations.



"Tagore wanted the exaltation of the spirit of man. Too long the human spirit had been suppressed by the despotism of the government and other organised force of power. It has to be liberated through the appreciation of bliss and beauty. Tagore wanted the freedom of the human spirit and this was dependent on mental and moral illumination. In place of mathematical analysis and conceptual fabrications, Tagore once again stood for the idealisation of the neglected human spirit. Human life has to be treated with a sense of earnestness or regarded as a hallucination. The deep consciousness of the reality of the personal man alone can make us realise the immensity of social tyrannies and deadening slavery perpetrated in the name of order and efficiency. Humanism alone can save us from separation and sectarianism. Man is a concrete complex of diversities and the richness and superior wealth of his inner being cannot be fathomed so long as we remain confined to the realm of abstractions".

Being a great poet he did not advice the repression of emotion and sentiments but supported the idea of harmonious development of all the powers of the individual.

He gave preference to villages in national construction and reform. The important programme of the national service is village service but this village service should not take the form of showing mercy to villagers. Even in service villagers should



be given proper respect. The gap between villagers and cities should be filled up. He also opposed casteism and untouchability. He was a supporter of the life of small towns rather than that of big cities.

In the words of Dr. H.B. Mukherjee, "firstly, the village has been the mother of civilisation and the cradle of all nations, especially in agricultural countries like China and India. Hence, in all work of national reconstruction, rural uplift should be given the top priority. Secondly, such service should be offered with due respect for the village people and never in a spirit of condescension. Thirdly, the village should develop as fully as the towns within wholesome limits, and no invidious distinction should be made regarding the development of the two. Fourthly, the introduction of joy and happiness into the life of the villagers is no less important than their material progress, so that their creative activities should receive as much encouragement as the economic. Fifthly, we should aim at awakening in the villagers the spirit of self determination and self-reliance. Sixthly, the principle of self determination should be wedded to the principle of cooperation among defferant groups, classes and professions in the village society to bring about its prosperity through an- all out combined effort. Seventhly, a wholesome synthesis of the claims of the individual and the society should be aimed at and brought about through the principle of voluntary co-operation among individuals and social groups. Eightly, the principle of freedom should be accepted as the grand dominating principle





inspiring and determining all other principles sub-ordinate to it, and social progress should be achieved through the spontaneous endeavour of the free human spirit, through a process of gradual and peaceful evolution, rather than through sudden and violent revolution. Finally in the last analysis, human ills can be cured neither by "isms" or "cants", nor by the machine or legislation, but by man himself. The human material, thus is of superlative importance, and the purification and enlightenment of the society the foremost objective. Social leaders turned out by such a society can alone lead the community and the nation to over all progress and prosperity".

Tagore believed in the respect and freedom of the individual. He did not admit any deference on the basis of religion, language and sex. He said that co-operation can give an end to the poverty of individual and nation. He wanted to cut the chains of slavery but he said that political freedom would be automatically obtained if the country is self-dependent economically and socially.

Tagore was not only a philosopher, social reformer and a great educationist but also a great nationalist to the core. He yearned for the freedom of his mother land from foreign bondage. To make his country free, he emphasised the need of economic and industrial development, social reforms, integration and removal of untouchability together with social discrimination in all its forms, beliefs and actions.



CHAPTER -IIEDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF TAGORE

Tagore has investigated the principles of education by his experience. As the founder of the Viswa Bharati he has introduced himself as a practical educationalist. Marking his contribution in Education it can be said that he was a great educationist although he never adopted the profession of teaching.

Rabindranath Tagore based his philosophy of education on human regeneration. The main tenets of his philosophy is the ultimate affinity between man, nature and God. His educational philosophy is an attempt at self realisation by means of communion with nature and God. According to Tagore the fundamental purpose of education is not merely to enrich ourselves through the fulness of knowledge but also to establish the bond of love and friendship between man and man.

Tagore was a spiritualist in education. Generally, naturalism discards transcendental experiences. Tagore was no doubt a naturalist. But his naturalism was not a narrow one. It was a sort of means to spiritualism which he wanted to develop among the boys.

Tagore was a humanist and wanted to improve the lot of individuals. He was pained by the cheapening of man and always believed that this world is a human world. According to him God too is to be found where the tiller is tilling the land.

Tagore believed that during education a child should enjoy



freedom. He should be free from all compulsions and restrictions otherwise he will remain sitting in the class like an exhibit of museum. Hence like Rousseau, Tagore also upheld Nature as the most effective and powerful teacher for a child. For this, he prescribed natural education for the child. This was the reason why he selected a natural and secluded area near a open jungle place for the location and establishment of his 'Shantiniketan'.

Though Tagore emphasised freedom and natural education for the child, yet he was of firm view that education is a vehicle of social reform. Hence it should act as a life giving current to the modern society serving it in various ways. Tagore believed in International Brotherhood. Hence by society he meant world society. He advocated that education should be according to the realities of life. Any education cut away from life is useless. Hence any plan of education should involve both nature and needs of man in a harmonious programme. Tagore has himself written - "Next to Nature the child should be brought into touch with the stream of social behaviour."

The spark of divinity that Tagore saw in man lends a special significance and import to his philosophy of education as it signals him out as a visionary who had his feet planted on firm grounds. His philosophy is as much relevant today as it was during his time, it is philosophy of love and compassion responsive, to human hopes and despair. It is a philosophy of man in search of himself in this myriad of wonderland called universe. Man is not only the centre of this edifice but is



the measure and the sanction of all things.

Tagore believes that the chief end of human life is to work for happiness of man upon this earth within the confines of nature which is his home. His philosophy of education is an elaboration of this central theme and provides ample opportunities to reconcile and resolve apparent anomalies in our day-to-day life. Tagore is a champion of humanity of human values and ideals. His philosophy of education aims at producing enfranchised citizens who may hold their heads high without any fear in their hearts. On the contrary it adds a lot in establishing world-understanding. As, one of the aims of Viswa-Bharati; the university founded by Rabindranath Tagore is -

" To seek to realise in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and West and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of the world peace through the establishment of free communion of ideas between the two hemispheres." (1)

#### CONCEPT OF EDUCATION -

Tagore was deadly against the then prevalent system of education which snatched the child from the laps of Nature very early in life, confined him within the boundaries of school and then put him into an office or factory. According to Tagore, God reveals Himself through Nature more effectively than through man made institutions. Hence the education of the child should be under natural surroundings so that he develops love for all things around him. Explaining the meaning of education Tagore

---

(1) Mani, R.S. : Educational Ideas and Ideals of Gandhi and Tagore, New Delhi: Society of India 1961 p.29.





has written - "That education is highest which not only imparts information and knowledge to us, but also promotes love and fellow-feeling between us and the living beings of the world."

#### TAGORE'S CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL MAN

Among the contemporary Indian Philosophers of Education Rabindranath Tagore is one who may be called a humanist in the strict sense of the term. In the tradition of Indian humanism, his humanism however is not naturalistic but integral. His philosophy is cosmopolitan humanism and his theory of education is directly deduced from this philosophy.

Philosophy of education cannot be understood without understanding the meta physical theory. In the meta physical theory of Rabindranath the most important idea is the concept of universal Man. This is not a concept in the strict sense of the term, it is rather a poet's vision. Referring to Universal Man as the ultimate reality Rabindranath said, "Truth is the infinite pursued by science, while reality is the definition of the infinite which relates truth to the person. Reality is human, it is what we are conscious of, by which we are effected, that which we express." (2)

This Universal Man is known by the individual not through direct realisation. In the words of Rabindranath, "Reality, in all the manifestations reveals itself in the emotional and imaginative background of our mind. We know it, not because we think

---

(2) Neogi P (Ed.), R.N.Tagore on Art and Asthetics, P-76.



of it, but because we directly feel it. It is not banished from our conscious mind." Thus Rabindranath Tagore cannot be called a rationalist as the naturalistic humanist is known to be. In the Indian tradition he considered man more than reason, a soul, a spirit, a finite, infinite being. The concept of Universal Man in his philosophy agrees with the cosmic vision of Divine in Gita.

The Universal Man is at the back of all movements, all change, all order and system in the universe. Man is very much a part of Him. Man and Nature cannot be conceived separate from God. The Universal Man includes both. As Rabindranath himself admitted, "I have never looked at God, Man and Nature as problems which can be considered in isolation from each other I could never conceive of their occupying water-tight compartments."<sup>(3)</sup>

The Universal Man is in every individual person, He lives even in humblest man. Therefore, even the most poor, illiterate and humble human being should not be neglected by us. The worship of the poor is a direct corollary of Rabindranath's vision of the Universal Man. As he said, "He is there, where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and His garment is covered with dust. Putt of thy holy mantle and even like Him come down on the dusty soil."<sup>(4)</sup>

Here a metaphysical problem arises in assigning personality to the ultimate reality. How can a person be ultimate

---

(3) R.N.Tagore, The Religion of Man, P-130.

(4) R.N.Tagore, Amar Dharma, P-46.



reality since personality is limited and distinct. It may be remembered in this connection that for Rabindranath personality is not something limited and mundane but also unlimited and supra-mundane, while in the human being it is found in the first form, in the Universal Man it may be seen in the conscious principal of oneness, the centre of relationships, is the reality, therefore, the ultimate object of attainment.

Tagore said, "I must emphasize this fact, that this world is a real world only in its relation to a central personality. When that centre is taken away, then it falls to pieces, becomes a heap of abstractions matter/and force, logical symbols and even those- the thinnest resemblances of reality would vanish into absolute nothingness, if the logical person in the centre, to whom they are related in some harmony of reason, were no where."<sup>(5)</sup> God is the perfect person. Human beings are persons in an imperfect sense. While man is an individual god. God is the Universal man. He is the supreme person. This person has been seen in two forms, Saguna and Nirguna. Both are two aspects of the same Universal Man. God is the peffect ideal type of Man. He possess all human qualities. In the words of Rabindra nath, "All human qualities find their suggestions in God."<sup>(6)</sup> He has even the trait of action which is characteristically human. In the words of Rabindranath, "Action must be attributed to Him, otherwise how could be give himself."<sup>(7)</sup> He is the meet-

---

(5) R.N.Tagore. Gitanjali Song II.

(6) R.N.Tagore. Personality P.98

(7) R.N.Tagore: Man. P.28.



ing ground of man and the world. It is in Him alone that human beings exchange their experiences. According to Rabindranath, "The relational world is for me both individual and universal. My world is mine, but it is also yours..... It is not in my own individual personality that Reality is contained, but in an Infinite personality."<sup>(8)</sup>

### AIMS OF EDUCATION

According to Rabindranath Tagore, the aim of education is self realisation. He is a poet and a saint who through his imagination and insight, realised the universal soul within himself and in Nature. According to Tagore this realisation by every one is the goal of education. "Self-realisation, according to Rabindranath Tagore, means the realisation of the universal soul in one's self."<sup>(9)</sup> Man's aim in life is to achieve this status. It is a process which cannot be realised without education. In the absence of education the individual will be deprived of self-realisation. Rabindranath does not find any dichotomy between thought and life, philosophy and education. He believes that every one can realise this potentiality. His philosophy is very much influenced by the Gita and the Upanishads. He is however, well aware of the educational ideas prevalent in the West. Therefore, Like Vivekanand, he synthesises the ancient vedantic traditions with the modern Western scientific attitude in formulating the goal of education.

---

(8) Karmoyoga - Santiniketan XIII Series.

(9) R.N.Tagore: Personality : P-58.





INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT -

Defining the aim of education, Rabindranath Tagore, "The fundamental purpose of education is not merely to enrich ourselves through the fulness of knowledge, but also to establish the bond of love and friendship between man and man."<sup>(10)</sup> This is the humanistic aim of education in Tagore's philosophy. His approach to ultimate reality is integral. He believes in an inner harmony between man and nature and God. The trinity, man, Nature and God are infact three aspects of the same reality. In man, again, the physical, the mental and the spiritual aspects are equally important and internally related. Therefore, Like Sir Arbindo, Rabindranath Tagore, believes in a multisided education with physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual and international outlook aims.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT -

Tagore laid equal emphasis on development of body along-with that of mind. Education, which helps children to take care of their body should be treated as very important. This aspect is unfortunately comparatively ignored in the present system of education. Tagore's heart went out to those children who were deprived of this type of education. He thought that there was an inseparable bond between physical and mental faculties of man.

According to Rabindranath Tagore, education of the body

---

(10) Bhartiya Visva Vidyalyaya Adarsa Siksa: P-270.



in the real sense, "does not exist in play and exercise but in applying the body systematically to some useful work."<sup>(11)</sup> It was because of his great emphasis on physical education that in his school Tagore provided full freedom for the development of body alongwith that of mind. He even prepared himself to ignore intellectual development for a moment. It was for this purpose that the site chosen for school was natural - obviously away from the hub-hub of city life. He wrote, "Even if they learnt nothing, they would have had ample of time for play, climbing trees, diving into ponds, plucking and tearing flowers, perpetrating thousand and one mischiefs on Mother Nature, they would have obtained the nourishment of the body, happiness of mind and the satisfaction of the natural impulses of childhood."<sup>(12)</sup>

It is, thus, with the end of physical fitness in view that Tagore wanted children to be in closer contact with nature in their early childhood. He said, "I speak in very moderate terms: Seven years till then let the child have nothing to do with clothes and shame. Till then let Nature alone conduct the indispensable education of the savage."<sup>(13)</sup>

He recommends education through nature not only for children but for adults also. He thinks that such education could free them from a false sense of shame and purify their outlook by making it easy and natural.

#### MENTAL DEVELOPMENT -

Besides the physical aim of education, Tagore equally lays

---

(11) R.N.Tagore : Alochana

(12) Siksa - P.2

(13) Ibid: P-84



emphasis upon the mental aim of education. Rabindranath Tagore is critical of the prevalent educational system which laid sole emphasis upon bookish learning. Presenting this attitude, he says, "We touch the world not with our mind, but with our books." (14) This is deplorable. Intellectualism takes us away from Nature and creates a gulf between man and man. To quote Rabindranath, "We know the people of books, not those of the world, the former and interesting to us, but the latter tiresome." (15)

In fact, the intellectual aim of education according to Rabindranath, is the development of the intellectual faculties, such as logical thinking, critical appraisal and assimilation. Two mental faculties which should be developed through education are : the power of thinking and the power of imagination. Both these are necessary for real manhood. Rabindranath criticises the prevalent system of education which puts too much stress on memory and too little on imagination and thinking. He suggests, "Ever since childhood, instead of putting all the burden on the memory, the power of thinking and the power of imagination should also be given opportunities for free exercise." (16)

#### MORAL AND SPIRITUAL AIMS -

Tagore, by orientation, was a religious man. Religion was the basis of his entire philosophy. In education, his religiosity was expressed by seeking to establish moral and

---

(14) Ibid: P-90

(15) Ibid: P-91

(16) R.N.Tagore: Siksar Herper: P-8.



spiritual values in it. He wrote: "Real moral training consists not in foisting moral teaching like external decorations but in making religion and morality an intimate part of life."<sup>(17)</sup>

One of the important aims of education is discipline. Religion too is a disciplinary force, even the source of discipline. Tagore wants the religious variety of discipline, namely Brahmcharya to be observed in education. In 'Siksa Samasya' we find an incident exposition of Brahmacharya (a life of a abstinence and discipline during student life) as a means to real education in early years.

Tagore was a great admirer of Tapasya and Sadhna. He believed that austere living and self-sacrifice could lead to nobility. He declared, "Nothing great and noble can be achieved except through severe suffering and sacrifice."<sup>(18)</sup> It is through the moral and spiritual force obtained by great suffering and sacrifice that the West could be in a position to lead the whole world. Tagore always reminded Indians of the value of these traits.

#### HARMONY WITH ENVIRONMENT -

According to Rabindranath Tagore the education should know his environment and create harmony with it. To quote Rabindranath Tagore, "True education consists in knowing the use of any useful material that has been collected, to know its real nature and to build along with a real shelter for life."<sup>(19)</sup>

(17) R.N.Tagore : Tapovan: P-130

(18) Chatra Sambhasan : Siksa : P-349

(19) Ibid.





This is particularly true about the rural education. Education should facilitate the educand's assimilation of his national culture. Through education, the educand should imbibe his cultural heritage and should be able to use it in his inter-action with the environment. Explaining this aim of education Rabindranath says, "If we believe that the chief aim of education for an Indian is to be initiated into this unique pursuit of India, then we must constantly remember that neither the education of the senses, nor the education of the intellect, but the education of the feeling should receive the place of honour in our schools... Our true education is possible only in the forest, through intimate contact with Nature purifying austere pursuits." (20)

#### INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK -

Tagore was a first-rate internationalist. He tried to establish a wonderful relationship between the East and West. The Vishva-Bharati established by him is Vishvabharati in real sense. From this point of view he appears to be taking interest in the development of international outlook.

#### UTILITARIAN AIM -

Tagore's approach towards aim of education was realistic. He was however, not favourable to the utilitarian aim of education which has permeated the present day philosophy of education. He objected to the imposition of the British system of education upon India which damaged the body structure of Indian system of



education to such an extent that inspite of concerted efforts since independence nothing much could be done to minimise its influence on the ethose of Indian Intelligientia. Tagore said, "Knowledge has two departments, one pure knowledge, and the other utilitarian knowledge. It should be known equally by man and woman, not for practical utility but for the sake of knowing.....the desire to know is the law of human nature." (21)

But Rabindranath did not ignore the earning of livelihood aim of education. He appreciated the practical bias in the Western system of education. Though he did not want to make education as an instrument or means for earning livelihood alone, he admitted that bread earning is necessary part of any sound goal of education. Therefore, he said.....that from the very begining such education should be imparted....., that one may facilitate earning a livelihood. He emphasised that the real aim of education is to develop man and woman who may be able to fulfil the needs of the country, "One of the main aims of education is to prepare the individual for the service of the country." (22)

The aim of education should prepare the future citizens by equipping them with such skills that enable them to take up their appointed note, as well as to foster socially desirable attitudes. Tagore, however, did not give as much importance to utilitarian aim of education as done by Gandhiji who considered education as an insurance against unemployment.

---

(21) Siksa : P-151

(22) Purvaprisher Anubritti - R.N.Tagore. Vol. XII P.517



In order to make education practical Tagore had definite plans and he worked according to them in his school. He wrote: "I always felt the need of the Western genius for imparting to my educational ideal that strength of reality which knows how to clear the path towards a definite end of practical good." (23)

Tagore believed that the aim of education and its orientation should be both socialistic and individualistic.

#### MULTISIDED AIM -

The above discussion concerning the means of education according to Rabindranath makes it clear that his was the multisided attack on this problem. He was against any one sided aim of education. This is in consistency with his humanistic aim of education since such an aim requires a multisided explanation of the goal of education.

---

(23) 'A Poet's school' Viswa-Bharati; Bulletin No. 9, P-9.



CHAPTER - III  
MEANS OF EDUCATION

Education is a process of learning. The human child learns both from Nature and society. Nature as a means of learning provides a surrounding for the child to learn. So far society is concerned, the entire socialisation of child takes place in it. Society provides a social environment for the development for the development of the child. This social environment in an institutionalised form is provided by family, reference groups, neighbourhood play group, school and others. The child is educated through and by all these formal and informal associations.

Tagore regards both nature and society as potent means of education.

NATURE AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION

Tagore believed that there was a kinship between nature and Man. It is through the natural environment that the child trains his sense by his contact with plants and trees, flowers and leaves. Education according to Tagore should be imparted, "In an institution where the first great lesson in the perfect union of man and nature, not only through love but through active communication, can be had unobstructed."<sup>(1)</sup> The tragedy of modern education is that it is failing in this task of establishing harmony between the two. It is only in a natural environment that the child can realise the presence of a univer-

---

(1) R.N.Tagore : 'A Poets' school P-8.





sal soul which is the sort of his existence and also that of matter. The teaching of different subjects is made natural through the intelligent utilisation of the child's environment. This knowledge of science may be helped by his observation of insects and animals, plants and trees, stars and moon and sun. The child's emotional and aesthetic training is helped by his observation and appreciation of form and colours and movement in nature. Here it becomes very clear that natural environment greatly contributes in the development of the child's sense organs and mind. His creative powers are expressed through his contact with natural objects. His extra-curricular activities in natural environment results in the development of different virtues.

Tagore regretted that, "Ours is the only country in recent history where the educational institution stopped at their boundary walls and were dissociated from the wide world outside." (2) pointing out to the gulf between bookish knowledge and the child's environment. Tagore lamented that the current education does no help in making the educand either an efficient worker or a good citizen. Both these are equally necessary to quote Tagore, "It is not enough for a farmer boy only to grow into a good farmer, but he should also grow into a good citizen of the country." (3)

Besides natural environment, social environment is no less important in the development of the child, in fact it is

---

(2) Siksar Vikrain: Siksa : 1342 B.S.Ed.: P-236

(3) Rabindra Rachnavab : Vol. XVII : P-516.



more valuable. The social environment makes the surrounding of the child in which they fulfil their needs and drives and develop their beliefs and ideas. It is the knowledge of this environment which creates the feeling of essential unity of mankind in the child. The impact of the social environment is more explicit in the relationship between the teacher and the taught on the one hand and the educand and his companions on the other. If this relationship is based upon love, sympathy and mutual understanding the educand adequately develops moral virtues. Every educated person should learn to play a role according to his particular qualities in the human society. The cultural environment again is a part of the social environment. In educational institutions this is created through extra curricular activities and cultural programmes.

Education is for the individual. The individual is very much dependent on society. Rather the individual owes a great deal to society. Education that is to develop the man must be such as to make man more useful to society. Thus it may be said that the education that takes man away from society is purposeless. In Tagore's opinion knowledge of society could best be obtained in direct contact with its life and people.

Ignorance is a great evil. Only mass education can bring mass awakening. Tagore says : "Where as higher learning is like a stream fertilising only a segment of the land, universal education is like a great shower irrigating the entire land

---



the mother tongue.

The use of English language for this purpose had been the main cause of the poor state of education in India unless our educational institutions adopt regional languages and national language as medium of instruction and unless sufficient books are available in these languages, the aim of universal education in India cannot be realised.

Besides regular teaching in educational institutions through mother tongue Rabindranath discovered several other important means of education. He was very much in favour of reviving the old rural institution in the villager. He attached much educational values to community entertainments, recitals of Ramayana and Mahabhartar and religious Kirtans. There are very much useful in moral and religious education. Besides the community fairs organised in villages from time to time are also useful means of educations. The vocational education in the villages is very much helped by the fairs. To make education mass-oriented the means of education should also indigenous and easily available in the rural areas.

As an educationist he believed strongly in the efficacy of tours as a means of providing knowledge. In his "Letters from Russia" he has written favourably about touring.

"One of the means of learning by seeing is travelling. You all know for how long I have entertained the idea of trave-

---



ling schools."

Further at one place he says that "if with the object of education alone, children could be taken all over the land for five years, then their education would be complete." For the development of mind also he takes travelling as essential. In addition to regular doses of instructions, education by travelling is essential for mind.





## CHAPTER - IV

### TAGORE'S CONCEPT OF RELIGION OF MAN

Tagore's humanism is most explicit in what he calls his religion of man. He said, "My religion essentially is a poet's religion."<sup>(1)</sup> What he means by poet's religion is a religion based upon vision. In his own words, "I have already confessed to you that my religion is a poet's religion, all that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. I frankly say that I cannot satisfactorily answer your questions about what happens after death. And yet I am sure that there have come moments when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illuminations of joy."<sup>(2)</sup>

Thus the poet's religion had no dogma or scripture but merely a widening of consciousness, breaking the limits of the individual and encompassing the entire universe. In Tagore's own words, "Religion can have no meaning in the enclosure of mere physical or material interest, it is in the surplus we carry around our personality- the surplus which is like the atmosphere of the earth, bringing to her a constant circulation of light and life and delight fulness."<sup>(3)</sup>

Defining his religion of man, Rabindranath said, "Religion consists in the endeavour of man to cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of man the Eternal,

(1) Soares; Anthony X, Lectures and Addresses by R.N.Tagore, P-12

(2) Ibid, Pp-16-17.

(3) Tagore, R.N.Tagore: The Religion of Man, P.45.



and to have faith in him. If these qualities were absolutely natural in individual, religion could have no purpose."<sup>(4)</sup> Evidently, by religion of man Tagore meant the development of religion spirit in man. It is due to this spirit that the man feels intimate relationship with other fellow beings. It is this type of religion which may be called secular at the same time. It is this type of religion again which should be the basis of all religions education. To quote Tagore, "Man in his religion cultivates the vision of a being who exceeds him in truth and with whom also he has kinship. These religions differ in details and often in their moral significance, but they have a common tendency. In them men seek their own supreme value, which they call divine, in some personality anthropomorphic in character. The mind which is abnormally scientific, stops at this, but it should know that religion is not essentially cosmic or even abstract; it finds itself, when it touches the Brahama in man; otherwise it has no justification to exist."<sup>(5)</sup> This religion is the essence of all the great religions of the world. Rabindranath emphasised the human element in all religions, when he said, "Religion concentrates itself on humanity, which illumines our reason, inspires our wisdom, stimulates our love, claims our intelligent services."<sup>(6)</sup>

This religion of man is a direct corollary of Tagore's conception of the intimate relation between man and Nature. It is the realisation of this intimate relationship which is the

---

(4) Ibid, P-144

(5) Ibid, P-63

(6) Ibid, P-144



chief aim of all religions. To quote Tagore, "Religion has its function in reconciling the contradiction by subordinating the brute nature to that we consider as the truth of man."<sup>(7)</sup> Thus religion is a personal realisation. Tagore was against all institutionalisation of religion. He said, "where religion has to make way for religious organisations it is like the river being dominated by its sand-bed, the current stagnates and its aspect become desert like."<sup>(8)</sup> Religion of man is the religion of universal man, not man in any particular space and time. All division and distinction between human beings therefore is anti-religious. All orthodoxy, rituals and dogmas are condemnable because they create divisions among human beings. Tagore was against all orthodoxy and static attitude in religion. Fanaticism according to him is anti-religions.

Religion of man is against idol worship. In it God represents human qualities. This God is a person and yet being dynamic. He cannot be represented by any idol. Explaining this aspect of Tagore's religion. Kalidas Bhattacharya has aptly written, "Rabindranath is against idolatry, not so much because idolators circumscribe God by primarily because they hypostatise as a person or entity what is really a living functions, and he would equally speak against those who, even knowing that he is a functional unity, yet personify him. If God is a person He is ever dynamic, ever dissolving Himself, as the dwelling spirit of all individuals."<sup>(9)</sup> Obviously, religion of Man agrees with human ethics. In it there is no distinction between the

(7) Ibid, p-148

(8) Modern Review, p-325

(9) Bhattacharya, Kalidas, Rabindranath on Religion, Homage from Visva-Bharati, 1962, P-32.



right and the good. It is against all puritanism. Its ethics involves all human qualities.

The influence of the Upanishads on Tagore's spiritual development cannot be exaggerated. From the day the Maharshi taught (during their wandering in the Himalayas) the boy Rabindranath too chant the holy verses of the Upanishads, the foundation of his religious education were firmly laid: Till his last days they were the inspiration and consolation of his life, and all his thoughts were coloured by them.

The Rishis (Seers) of Ancient India knew that the human mind could never completely comprehend Brahma, the Absolute. There is one remarkable cryptic veril in the Upanishads, " I do not think that I know him, nor that I know him not." (10)

Tagore drank deep from the waters of this spiritual fountainhead. It was the vision of a Brahma who permeated with his immanent presence both the starry- heavens and the inner heart of man that gave wings to Tagore's Poetry. Like those sages who composed hymns of praise to the sun, in who effulgence they saw the glory of God, Tagore too could sing :

"I know the joy that hidden in the heart of light

Touches me, is one with my soul.

I have been annointed in the holy water of consciousness.

That flow from the font of light.

And have my share of immortality.

In this multitudinous earth.

---

(10) A.Bose - Later Poems of Tagore.





I can be united with the Supreme Me  
And enter the Path of Bliss." (11)

The Gitanjali (1913), which brought Tagore the Noble Prize, is an external duet, between Thee and Me, God and the human soul. His religion is not one of quilt pietism or withdrawal from the world.

In Sadhana, lectures delivered at Harward University, he gives a poet's interpretation of the Upanishadic verses, important for any one interested in Tagore's religion thoughts.

According to him, the religion is too concrete a thing, though he has no right to speak about it. But if ever he has somehow come to realise God, if the vision of God has ever been granted to him, he must have received the vision through this world. Through man, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soul.

Besides these Tagore said that I have not been born into a dead world, mine eyes have never been tired of looking at the loveliness of this visible world, nor has there been an end to the Supreme Wonder. The eternal, deathless voice that has echoed though the ages spreading over earth, sky, 'water has found its full response in my heart. Learning the narrow path of devotion to the goddess of Literature, I have gone out to serve the Supreme Man, the Godman, and brought him the worship of my works and the offering of my remunniation. I have come to the earth's great Pilgrimage here, at the heart of all countries, all races, all histories, dwells the God of Humanity.

---

(11) A Bose - Later Poems of Tagore.



### HUMANISM OF TAGORE

Derived from Latin Homo meaning human being, Humanism is the philosophy in which man is the measure of everything. In historical retrospect whatever had been found to be useful for human welfare has been attached with the concept of humanism such as the idea of social welfare, scientific attitude, progress of democratic institutions and other such concepts emerging out of the process of democratisation of man and society. As a philosophy, humanism has a definite notion regarding man, his problem and universe. Greatest good of the greatest number according to democratic means is the mainstay of this social and philosophical concept. Its major contribution have been -

- a) Belief in life in harmony with the noblest ideas and the highest values.
- b) Affirms the dignity of man.
- c) Faith in the necessity of establishing a social order based on Peace, Progress and democracy.
- d) Commitment to peace and internationalism.

It is but obvious that such a meaningful concept must have far reaching influences on the social and educational aspects of society. The impact, in brief, is as under :-

- a) Education is considered an important part of man and society.
  - b) Education has a creative role in establishing an ideal society.
-



- c) Education is an agency of freedom and responsibility.
- d) Employment oriented education.

To sum up, man is not only the centre he is the measure and the sanction of all things. Humanism believes that the chief end of human life is to work for happiness of man upon this earth within the confines of nature which is his home.

Pointing out the human element in Tagore's philosophy, Humayun Kabir wrote, "Rabindranath Tagore was one of the greatest humanists that the world had known. The key note of his life was resistance to tyranny in all forms. He struggled against economic exploitation, political subjugation, social inertia and injustice and religious intolerance and insensitivity."<sup>(12)</sup> These words however, do not convey the most important aspect of Tagore as a humanist. Undoubtedly he fought for human virtues but the more important point is that he presented a humanistic philosophy and a religion of man which again were the foundation stone of a gigantic system of humanistic education.

Tagore was essentially a poet therefore his humanism is generally expressed in his literature. Pointing out this fact, K.Sen writes, "Humanity is the very epitome of the wide and varied universe. To know it properly is to realise the highest manifestation of Brahma since all its world wide aspect humanity is premeated with the spirit of God. This universal greatness of humanity has truly found its triumphant poetic expression in our age in the literature of Rabindranath."<sup>(13)</sup>

---

<sup>(12)</sup> R.Verma : R.N.Tagore - Prophet Against Totalitarianism.

<sup>(13)</sup> The Genius of Rabindranath its character and lineage.  
P-33



Besides literature Tagore's humanism is expressed by his idea of religion of man. His works bear testimony to his unstinted, emphasis upon the uniqueness of the human individual, his greatness in the world of the living, and this intimate relationship with nature and God. It was due to his humanism that while he opposed the British, he was not against the British people. It was again this humanism which made him work relentlessly for the establishment of a cosmopolitan educational institution in the form of Shantiniketan. His educational system is as much the embodiment of his Humanism as his literature is its expression.

---





MAN AND NATURE

Rabindranath Tagore believed that reality is one in which God, nature and man reside in a spirit of intimate relationship. There are, in fact three dimensions of the same reality. Man is intimately related to God and Nature. Man and Nature are but two expressions of the same Divine. Divinity is panentheistic, it runs in and through the fabric of all creation, it permeates the cosmos. In his philosophy of education. Rabindranath considers the intimate relationship of man and nature as the basis of self realisation. His system accepts both in spirit of mutual dependence and harmony. Nature is propitious, is conducive towards man's attainment of his spiritual and material excellence. Nature and Man are mutually amenable. Tagore says "In the west the prevalent feeling is that Nature consists exclusively of in animatic things and beasts, that there is sudden unaccountable break where human nature begins.. According to it, everything that is low in the scale of beings is merely Nature, and whatever has the stamp of perfection in it, intellectual and moral, is human nature.....the Indian mind, never has any hesitation in acknowledging its kinship with Nature, its unbroken relation with all"(1)

The intimate relationship between Man and Nature is the hall mark of Indian thought. This relation is conceived as companionship, a permanent source of inspiration, a state of communion. A life divorced from Nature cannot be a complete life. According to Tagore, even in the liberated state our

---

(1) R.N.Tagore : Sadhana P.7.



relationship with Nature continues, "The soul's birth in the spiritual world does not coincide with severance of relationship with what we call Nature, but freedom of relationship." (2)

Condemning a life divorced from with Nature Tagore wrote, "When a man does not realise his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison house whose walls are alien to him, when he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, then is he emancipated ..... then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the all is established." (3) Pointing out to the intimate relationship between man and nature Tagore said, "Man is born into a world which to him is intensely living, where he as an individual occupies the full attention of his surroundings." (4)

It was this firm conviction of the intimate relationship between man and nature that made Tagore emphasise so much on the natural environment in schools. He wanted that "young mind should be saturated with the idea that it has been born in a human world which is in harmony with the world around it." (5) Even the superiority of Man lies in his ability to be in union with nature, an ability which is not quite possessed by other living beings.

Tagore considers the nature of creation and man as physical. According to it, the universe is born out of matter and its physical form is real. Although it is changeable, but there changes occur mechanically according to absolute laws and are

---

(2) R.N.Tagore; Personality P.94.

(3) R.N.Tagore; Sadhana, P.8.

(4) R.N.Tagore; Personality; P.113

(5) Ibid. P.114



controlled by nature. The forth of nature, thus is entirely clear and search of spiritualism in it is useless. According to him man also is a combination of physical elements. The atoms of elements of which he is composed, are more developed, powerful and complex than the atoms of creation and they proceed from simple to complex. Human life itself has developed from animal life and many animal instincts are present in him in their natural form. So in order to adapt-man to the environment through education, he should be provided suitable opportunity for the free development of his natural instincts. According to him mind and spirit, too are materialistic and they operate mechanically as a part of the body. Again he proclaimed that, "It is their first introduction to the great truth that man's true relationship with the world is that of personal love and not that of the mechanical law of causation." (6)

Tagore not only emphasised man's intimate relationship with Nature but also pointed out Nature's intimate relationship with Man. Thus the relationship of Man and nature according to him is reciprocal. Most of the problems of human beings are simply due to not understanding this mutual relationship. To quote Tagore, "When man's consciousness is restricted only to the immediate vicinity of his human self, the deeper roots of his nature do not find their permanent soil, his spirit is ever on the brink of starvation." (7)

The educational institutions, therefore, should develop

---

(6) R.N. Tagore : Personality: P. 112  
 (7) R.N. Tagore : Sadhana P. 11



some sort of communion between educands and their environment. This is particularly necessary for the growth of creative impulse and for progressing in creative works.

### EDUCATIONAL TRINITY

Apart from nature and society, the other formal means of education are the institutions that impart education to students. Tagore translated his dreams of ideal education into action by establishing institutions that educated people according to his plans. He sought to put his various ideals of education to work through various institutions at Santiniketan, Siriniketan and Visva-Bharati. Explaining education trinity in the educational philosophy of Rabindranath, S.S.Sinha writes, "Santiniketan, Siriniketan and Visva-Bharati may be said to constitute Tagore's educational trinity through which he endeavoured to develop his educational theme in three different complementary directions. The school came first in the field and was far away the most important, as it embodied all the poet's main teachings about education. The three institutions thus displayed a discernible pattern of growth and expansion, illustrating their underlying creative unity." (8)

#### SANTINIKETAN -

Tagore was very much impressed by the ancient Tapovanas or ashramas of India which used to impart education in a serene and calm atmosphere. Explaining his ideas of Santiniketan to

---

(8) Sinha, S.S., 'social thinking of R.N.Tagore. P.54.





Sri J.C. Bose Rabindranath wrote, "I am trying to start a school at Santiniketan. It will be conducted just on the lines of residential institutions of ancient times. There shall not be the least trace of luxury- we shall not be able to become true Hindus if all of us, whether rich or poor, do not learn right Brahmacharya. Frivolity and luxury are degenerating us. Wants of all descriptions are overpowering us only because we are failing to accept poverty with equanimity." (9)

The ideal institutions will have to be based on the minimum necessities of life. Barenness and simplicity should be its virtue in sheer contrast to the farrago of wants and sophistication of an urban existence that surrounds us.

In one of his poems Tagore exhorts :

"Be not ashamed, my brother, to stand before the proud and powerful with your white robe of simpleness."

"Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty, and know that what is huge is not great, and pride is not everlasting."

"We must establish in every manner possible, the ideal of reducing the unnecessary in our life."

Shantiniketan was started on a small scale with a school and Boarding House. The school was named 'Brahmacharyasram' and inaugurated on 22nd Dec., 1901. The school gave provision of a suitable environment for the all round development of the educands. In brief it was the students own world in which they themselves

---

(9) Sabuj Patra, Voll. II, Sravan 9, 1308 B.S., P.30.



manage everything and developed through this experiment clarifying this pattern Tagore said, "I always try to impress upon their minds that it is their own world upon which their life ought fully and freely react. In the school administration they have their place, and in the matter of punishment we mostly rely upon their own court of justice." (10)

#### SIRINIKETAN -

Siriniketan embodied Tagore's idea of a rural institute. This was different from Shantiniketan as it was mainly based upon the needs of rural people. Tagore had personal experience of the difficulties of rural people and he was very much impressed by the need of education among them. He was convinced that a universal education was very much necessary for the regeneration of the Indian villages. Therefore, he started an experiment at Siriniketan. This experiment was based on the faith that, "Given the right tools and organisations, the villagers can help themselves upward by development based in research and by a welfare programme based upon the study of human need in every village in India." Siriniketan was started particularly to fulfil the needs of education in rural setting. Its activities therefore, not only include literacy but also social reform. It sought to realise the ideal of welfare in the village. It endeavoured to remove the social evil from the village society. In the economic field it tried to teach the villagers the methods and techniques of farming and other vocations. In

---

(10) R.N.Tagore, 'Personality', p.146.



brief its aim was to realise an alround rural reconstruction.

'As a centre of Rural Reconstruction'-

The object of Siriniketan is to bring back life in its completeness into the villages making themselves reliant and self respectful, acquainted with the cultural traditions of their own country and competent to make an efficient use of the modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic conditions.

The aims and objects of the Institute, as originally set-forth detail are as follows -

1. To win the friendship and affections of villages and cultivators by taking a real interest in all that concerns, their life and welfare, and by making a lively effort to assist them in solving their most pressing problems.
2. To take the problem of the village and field to the classroom for study and discussion and to the experimental form for solution.
3. To carry the knowledge and experience gained in the classroom and the experimental form to the villagers, in the endeavour to improve their sanitation and health, to develop their resources and credit, to help them to sell their resources and buy their requirements to the best advantage, to teach them better method of growing crops and vegetables and of keeping livestock, to encourage them to learn and practise arts and crafts, and to bring



home to them the benefits of associated life, mutual aid and common endeavour.

4. To work out practically an all round system of elementary education in the villages based on the Boy Scout. Ideal and training, with the object of developing ideas of citizenship and public duty such as may appeal to the villagers and to with in their means and capacity.
5. To encourage in the staff and the students of the Department itself a spirit of sincere service and willing sacrifice in the interests of and on terms of comradeship with their poorer, less educated and greatly harassed neighbours in the villages.
6. To train the students to a due sense of their own intrinsic worth, physical and moral, and in particular to teach them to do with their own hands everything which a village householder or cultivator does or should do for a living, if possible, more efficiently.
7. To put the students in the way of acquiring practical experience in cultivation, dairying, animal husbandry, poultry-keeping, smithing, weaving, tanning, practical sanitation work and in the art and spirit of co-operation.
8. To give the students elementary instruction in the science connected with their practical work to train them to think and record the knowledge acquired by them for their own benefit and for that of their following men. (11)





VISVA - BHARTI -

Due to his wide travels in Asia and Europe Tagore was convinced that human good lies in the emergence of the world society, and the communication among various human basis. He wanted to built up an educational institution for the meeting of East and West.

With the emergence of industrial civilisation Rabindranath Tagore came to the conclusion that East and West could no longer remain isolated from each other. Tagore quotes, "In the present age, with its facility of communication, geographical barriers have lost their reality, and the great federation of men, which is waiting either to find its true scope or to break as under in a final catastrophe, is not a meeting of individuals, but of various human races." (12)

Tagore treated the meeting of East and West incomplete. This meeting could be complete and fruitful to both the rides if we could find some common meeting grounds. In the opinion of the poet, "One of such places is the university, where we can work together in a common pursuit of truth, share together our common heritage and realise that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged, but for all mankind." (13) This led to the opening of Visva-Bharati.

---

(12) R.N.Tagore. 'An Eastern University'. P.1

(13) Ibid. P.2



Explaining the aim and function of Visva-Bharati, Tagore said, "Being strongly impressed with the need and the responsibility, which every individual must today realise according to his power, it have formed the nucleus of an International University in India, as one of the best means of promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West. This institution, according to the plan I have in mind, invites students from West and the East to study the different systems of Indian philosophy, literature, art and music in their proper environment, encouraging them to carry on research work in collaboration with the scholars already engaged in the task."<sup>(14)</sup> This Visva-Bharati was developed as a centre of Indian culture, Eastern culture, international culture and mass welfare and rural reconstruction. This ideal had to be realised through the efforts of both the teachers and the students.

The following major aspects of the Visva-Bharati programme may be broadly marked out :

- I) As a centre of Indian culture, for the co-ordination and cultivation of the different aspects of Indian learning and culture, with reference to the different races, nationalities, sects and creeds of the country, past and present in order to know the mind of India as a whole.
- II) As a centre of Eastern culture, for the concentration and cultivation of the different culture of Asian countries, in order to realise the unity of the eastern spirit and

---

(14) R.N.Tagore, 'An Eastern University', P.2.



harness it to the cause of human welfare.

- III) As a centre of International culture to seek to establish a living relationship between the East and West to promote inter-racial amity and inter-cultural understanding and fulfil the highest mission of the present age-the unification of mankind.
- IV) As a centre of Mass welfare and Rural Reconstructions to lay the foundation of a happy, contented and humane life in village as well as to inculcate the spirit of social service and produce practical efficiency as an essential part of education.

In Tagore's own words, "the ideal we have for our institution is that it should be a perpetual creation by the co-operative enthusiasm of teachers and students, growing with the growth of their soul; a world in itself, self sustaining, independent, rich with ever renewing life, radiating life across space and time, attracting and maintaining round it a planetary system of dependent bodies. Its aim lies in imparting life breath to the complete man, who is intellectual as well as economic, bound by social bonds, but aspiring towards spiritual freedom and final perfection."

\*\*\*\*\*



## C H A P T E R - VI

### GENERAL PLAN OF AN IDEAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Curriculum and method of teaching indicate the general implementation aspect of any educational system. Any educationist when devising any new form or pattern of education has also to suggest the curriculum and method that he proposes to adopt for achieving the objectives.

#### Tagore's Curriculum :

Tagore was convinced that the prevailing curriculum did not develop man in his futures because primarily education was directed towards acquiring a job. It partially equipped man to obtain a job. The total personality of man was never developed. So he desired to, " establish in the Santineketan Ashram a field for the pursuit of culture on a wide scale. It included not only the text books prescribed in the schools but also all kinds of arts and crafts, dance, music and play, as well as all knowledge and skill necessary for rendering service to the villages". (1)

The curriculum in the school was activity oriented- Activity curriculum of a passive type has been described by Prof. J.S. Brubacher like this. "Here learning is a matter of sense impression The senses are supposed to be active in absorbing impressions of

---

1. Visva-Bharti, P. 148, - 49





the world round about the learner. Education is something that is done to the child from without he undergoes it. The mind is preoccupied with mirroring the universe of knowledge and value". (2)

The books written by him and his colleagues and published by "Visva-Bharati Samgrah" were recommended for the study of children. Rich and varied readings was regarded as mental vitamins by Tagore. Wrote Tagore "A variety of vitamin is introduced in our body through our food, which gives us health and strength; similarly, all the subjects of study that contain mental vitamins should collectively find a place in the activities of the ashram" (3)

Tagore was of the opinion that a realistic curriculum should take into account the economic life of the people also- Rabindranath pleaded that the curriculum should be related to the every day life of the community. Tagore "had no curriculum of studies as such. He had, instead, a curriculum of life. The emphasis all the time was on learning to live rather than on living to learn" (4)

#### Tagore's Method of Teaching:

Tagore believed in the natural and realistic method of learning and education. He stressed that "learning can become

- 
2. Modern Philosophies of Education; P. 227.
  3. Visva-Bharati; P-149
  4. Siksa. P-20



the world round about the learner. Education is something that is done to the child from without he undergoes it. The mind is preoccupied with mirroring the universe of knowledge and value". (2)

The books written by him and his colleagues and published by "Visva-Bharati Samgrah" were recommended for the study of children. Rich and varied readings was regarded as mental vitamins by Tagore. Wrote Tagore "A variety of vitamin is introduced in our body through our food, which gives us health and strength; similarly, all the subjects of study that contain mental vitamins should collectively find a place in the activities of the ashram" (3)

Tagore was of the opinion that a realistic curriculum should take into account the economic life of the people also- Rabindranath pleaded that the curriculum should be related to the every day life of the community. Tagore "had no curriculum of studies as such. He had, instead, a curriculum of life. The emphasis all the time was on learning to live rather than on living to learn" (4)

#### Tagore's Method of Teaching:

Tagore believed in the natural and realistic method of learning and education. He stressed that "learning can become

- 
2. Modern Philosophies of Education; P. 227
  3. Visva-Bharati; P-149
  4. Siksa, P-20



the world round about the learner. Education is something that is done to the child from without he undergoes it. The mind is preoccupied with mirroring the universe of knowledge and value". (2)

The books written by him and his colleagues and published by "Visva-Bharati Samgrah" were recommended for the study of children. Rich and varied readings was regarded as mental vitamins by Tagore. Wrote Tagore "A variety of vitamin is introduced in our body through our food, which gives us health and strength; similarly, all the subjects of study that contain mental vitamins should collectively find a place in the activities of the ashram" (3)

Tagore was of the opinion that a realistic curriculum should take into account the economic life of the people also- Rabindranath pleaded that the curriculum should be related to the every day life of the community. Tagore "had no curriculum of studies as such. He had, instead, a curriculum of life. The emphasis all the time was on learning to live rather than on living to learn" (4)

#### Tagore's Method of Teaching:

Tagore believed in the natural and realistic method of learning and education. He stressed that "learning can become

- 
2. Modern Philosophies of Education; P. 227
  3. Visva-Bharati; P-149
  4. Siksa, P-20



sound only when it proceeds from the near to the distant from the familiar to the unfamiliar. If our learning continues to be based mainly on what does not exist all round and what is not present before us then such knowledge must be feeble. If we can fully and properly grasp what is familiar, only then can we apperceive what is unseen and unfamiliar". (5)

Rabindranath said "in contact with real objects that are present with the pupils their power of observation and reasoning will develop" (6). To cultivate observation and reasoning among students the method to be adopted was that of exercise. The students have to be placed in a situation where they would be compelled to think. Tagore writes, "A variety of questioning and answering has to be conducted on what they have studied in books. Indeed, we should think that their education has been real if they venture to criticise the matter contained in the text books. Defferent problems of day life should be presented before them and discussion should be conducted on their solution... Remember, this education is much greater than class teaching" (7)

Tagore wanted to maintain harmony between physical and mental education. For he believed that the relationship between the two is essential for proper personality development

- 
5. Siksa; P-21
  6. Ibid; P-23
  7. Siksa; P-261-62





Tagore went to the extent in his belief that learning while walking is the best method of learning. To him, therefore "teaching while walking is the best method of teaching. It is so not only because walking facilitate learning many things through direct observation, but because it keeps our awakened mental faculties constantly alert and receptive through with ever varying scenes and objects and the rhythmic marching together of the inner and the outer . . . such dynamic learning is entirely fruitful for living human beings. The state education within the class room, on the other hand, causes a divorce between the body and the mind, without initiative" (8) Tagore was convinced that "if the whole body were active in all its functions, we should learn that much more rapidly". (9) Tagore allowed untraditional freedom to students in his school. He said "I would allow all over boys and girls during class to jump up even to climb up a tree, to run off and chase after a cat or dog, or to pick some fruit off a branch . . . . I tried to keep in mind the need of the child to use the whole of its body in acquiring a vocabulary and in mastering a whole sentence. A boy would say to me, ' may I go for a run? 'Yes, of course'. I would say, because I knew that by this means some teduim would be broken and that when again he felt lively, it would be much easier for him to receive and to digest. It is while children

---

8. Ibid.

9. Visva-Bharti Quarterly, P.9



feel dull from the passivity of ~~their~~ minds and through being asked to be inert receptacles, without any activity of body, that they cease altogether to assimilate the non-living lesson" (10)

Tagore believed that learning and practice should go on simultaneously. He pointed out explicitly that "if we express a thing as soon as we learn it, one conception of it would become sound" (11)

#### DISCIPLINE

Tagore was never a believer in the dictum of "spare the rod and spoil the child, rather he believed in something exactly contrary to this. He was of the opinion that given greater freedom students would perform better. He was never an upholder of orthodox discipline. According to Rabindranath, "harsh discipline betrays a lack of insight on the part of a teacher into the delicate and intricate mechanism of the human mind. It is specially true in dealing with adolescence which, being a transition period in the life of man is marked by acute sensitiveness and self consciousness" (12) 'He felt that strict discipline generated an atmosphere of cruel slavery. which is very demoralising for children. Again he pleads "Forgiveness is the virtue of the strong, and a teacher who lack in this

---

10. Ibid. P-7-8

11. Siksa Samskar P-39

12. 'Chatrasasan tantra', Siksa Vol. I. P-211-12



essential quality is unfit for tacking charge of human children" (13)

Rabindranath was of the opinion that children outbursts should be allowed and appreciated in a proper perspective because if feelings are suppressed they generate cowardice, where as if allowed expression with proper control they provide atmosphere for the development of character and intelligence. Tagore did not believe in the imposition of discipline from outside, he wanted it from inside. To him, "the most desirable thing would be that they (students) would maintain discipline in every thing not under any external compulsion but out of their own accord"<sup>(14)</sup>. Following the above principle Tagore very strongly recommended granting of self-government of students. He wrote, "it is our students who are creating this institution- (Santiniketan) the spirit of which is emanating from their soul is the true spirit of the institution . . . let them not at all mistakenly believe that we teachers are running the school. Of course, we are doing our share of duty, but its main responsibility rests on them." (15)

As self-government was accorded to students, maintenance of discipline was also their concern. If there was any

- 
- 13. 'Asrameṛ Sikṣa, Ibid, P-337
  - 14. Viśva-Bharaṭī Patrikā, P-289
  - 15. Ibid, P-285



violation, normally the students would see to it. Tagore was a firm believer in the Indian philosophy of Prayeschitta. He thought that proper discipline cannot be imposed or enforced from outside.

### Examination System

There is a wide spread dissatisfaction with the existing examination system. Tagore too did not find it satisfactory. The examination system adopted in Tagore's school is unique and unheard of the principle of self determination government is applied in this matter also. The examinations were conducted in an atmosphere of complete freedom and faith. The dignity of the examiners was upheld.

Man's association with nature in a natural way, human dignity, an atmosphere of freedom for learning, education for full development of personality and complete education can thus be taken as hall marks of Tagore's philosophy of education.





### Principles of Education

Through his educational trinity Rabindranath Tagore aims to develop an ideal educational system in India. His aim of education is one of the most comprehensive, including various aspects of human personality and different strata of Indian society and the world community. He lays emphasis on physical, mental, moral, religious, spiritual, in fact all the aspects of a man's education. Thus he developed his plan on a very comprehensive perspectives. His educational plan is activity oriented. Its aim is to develop an all round human personality. Its means includes extra curricular activities besides bookish education. The curriculum in his educational institution is not fixed but changes according to the needs of the educands. His only emphasis is on life; life of the individual, of the rural masses, of the poor Indians and that of man as a member of an international community. He wants to make students self-reliant. His aim is to develop a sort of communion between man & nature.

Freedom is the key note of Rabindranath's system of education. He believes in complete freedom of all type, freedom of intellectual decision, knowledge action and worship. This freedom can be achieved by the practice of equanimity, harmony and balance. Through this practice the educand may learn to distinguish between truth and false, natural and artificial relevant and irrelevant, permanent and temporary.



liberal and narrow, universal and individual. Thus the educand may achieve a harmony in the true, natural, relevant, permanent and real elements. Once he acquires this ability he may progress by self guidance. This infact is the real meaning of self education based on self realisation.

Education, according to Rabindranath, is a progress of self-realisation. This self-realisation lies in the attainment of freedom when intelligence, feeling and determination work freely. It is not the absence of control but self control. Once it is achieved there is no danger of straying from the right path because the senses, intelligence, emotions, feelings and mental powers of the educated person are guided by his own self.

The ideal educational system, according to Rabindranath, should aim at man's perfection. Perfection means the development of all the aspects of human personality. This is the sole aim of education. This again should be realised on a universal scale since unless the individual acquires an abiding faith in the universal soul he cannot realise himself. Thus, education should lead to the realisation of universal man.

As it is clear by the above discussion that Rabindranath tries to utilise the findings of modern Western Educational Psychology as well as the ancient wisdom of India. In his ideal



educational system, the educational process is mainly functional with activity as its basis. It requires both the educand and the educator to be always active. In it learning and practice go together. Rabindranath is against all type of orthodox discipline and corporal punishment. He believes that discipline through rod is not at all necessary in educational institutions. It only leads to depression. On the other hand, Rabindranath observes, "I have a deep rooted conviction that only through freedom can man attain his fulness of growth" (16) In his ideal educational system, therefore, all discipline is self-discipline. The educands are allowed to commit mistakes and learn through them. Like Sri Aurobindo International University, Santiniketan has a type of self government.

Rabindranath was against the then prevalent educational system of educands evaluation. In this field also he recommends the principle of self determination. He suggests that invigilation is absolutely unnecessary and the examinees may themselves take their question papers and answer them. He tried to build up an ideal educational system and experimented in all its facts such as aims, medium, means, curriculum, management and co-curricular activities. One may not agree with the details of his educational system and may not call



it ideal, but nevertheless, the system bears the stamp of his genius and was a bold super structure based on comprehensive philosophy, with the best of intentions of developing perfect men and women as citizen of the world community.





CHAPTER - VIIA GREAT MAN IN EDUCATION

Tagore is celebrated for his advance ideals and innovations in education as for his poems, philosophy stories, plays and pictures. James Findlay of Manchester University writes in his foundation of education "There are two great men in our epoch, John Dewey in the West and Rabindranath Tagore in the East, whose wisdom not only illumines the general mind, but has stepped to the level of the children."<sup>(1)</sup> Dewey himself acknowledged the greatness of Tagore. This is the Dewey who touched educational renaissance and re-orientation after the great war. In 1926 one of Dewey's followers and Co-workers, Prof. Kilpatrick came to India and visited Santiniketan and Sriniketan, when he observed the educational system and held discussion with the workers. He had been full of admiration of Tagore's ideals and the way in which there were being pursued. As he came to know these people better, he had got them to assist him in spreading the principles of his progressive education throughout India. Those who accepted Dewey's forward looking view had set up a powerful international organisation known as the new education fellowship at Calais in 1921, of which branches were formed in many countries. Tagore as president and two Santiniketan workers in charge of its activities.

In Feb. 1926, the education Minister of undivided Bengal, the progressive Aziz-ul-Haq, called for Santiniketan's help in

---

(1) G.D.Khanolkar - The Lute and the plough of life of R.N.Tagore  
p-340.



holding an education week for the purpose of reviewing secondary education from a new angle. During this week, the New Education Fellowship also held its conference, at which Tagore spoke on educational ideals. Nationalising education and Music's place in education and culture. He agreed that education must be given throughout in the mother tongue, but he also wanted arrangement for home study, for the benefit of those unable to attend school or university. He wanted special syllabus and text-books, for such students, so that they might achieve contact with all knowledge of science. He called for text-books written in simple language, there would necessitate the formulation of a scientific terminology a task for which he would enlist the help of Savants from all the provinces of India and for which he promised his own assistance.

At the time of education week, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was Vice-Chancellor, who not only recommended the work of Scientific terminology suggested by Tagore, but also launched a series of books to impart popular education. So long as Dr. Mukherjee was in office, ~~both these ventures prospered and~~ the books published included Tagore's own Introduction to Bengali. After the Doctor's departures the work hung fire. However Viswa-Bharati under Tagore's guidance, brought out a series of books as universal knowledge and completed his design after his death. The series comprised more than 150 books in simple language, convenient in size and cheap in price on a multitude

---



of subjects. One of these books called 'Knowledge of the universe' is written by Tagore's own hand and affords an excellent example of how to treat of a complex subject in tasteful language.

Tagore was one of the most prolific writers of the world. He wrote in Bengali about 35 poetical works, about 40 plays, about 19 story-books and novels, over 50 collection of Essays on Literature, Art, Religion and other subjects and composed over 30,000 songs.

Overall, Tagore's influence is felt everywhere in Bengal but significance is also great in the cultural life in India. He was a great poet, perhaps the greatest poet of India - His philosophy of Education highly acceptable for the improvement of Indian educational system. He was also a great idealist, a dreamer of dreams.

#### NOVELS - AND A NEW IDEALISM

Rabindranath Tagore wanted to bring change in the social thought and social outlook of Indians through his written work. He wanted to bring social awakening, love & sympathy among Indians. His novels, stories, plays, literary essays and miscellaneous articles had a philosophy of his own. Tagore wrote songs and poems also. In addition to these there was all the great volume of topical writing that he had to do as editor of the magazines, 'Bengal Darshan and Bhandar', that he could achieve this colossal literary out-put without neglecting his duties to his family, his school and the public, is truly amazing. Only a rare genius could have performed the work.

Rabindranath Tagore is called the father of the Bengali short stories that is why he is considered the father of the



realistic psychological problem novel on social subject. Rabindranath Tagore introduced a wholly new subtlety and beauty in his delineation of the relations between the sexes. Before him, the leading novelists were Bankim Chandra and Ramesh Chandra Datta, who embellished their works with coincidence, chance, the unusual and the supernatural. Neither their situation nor their character were true to life, and they both posed and resolved their problem in an artificial manner. These writers were not able to picture the incidents into their novels which took place around them. But Tagore had keen observation of his surrounding atmosphere and so he put them in his novels in a beautiful manner.

Tagore's first social novel - 'The Rifled Nest' depicts the warm but pure and disinterested affection between a brother in law and a sister in law. While writing this he started 'Mote in the Eye' for the Bengal Darshan magazine.

This novel has a very simple plot and just four or five characters, but it captives the reader by its insight into human nature and the artistry of its portrayal 'Mote in the Eye' depicts the heart of a woman in revolt against orthodox standards. After that about two and a half years later, Tagore wrote the novel 'Sport of Destiny' which carries a lesson for a rigid and unthinking society.

In middle of 1907 saw Tagore's third social novel 'Gora', which achieved a scope that its author originally never contemplated. Though he had withdrawn from rough and tumble of poli-

---





tics, Tagore had never ceased to revolve the Country's affairs in his mind, always thinking upon problem and situation and the result was this novel 'Gora', with its lovely topics and fresh situation. The scene is laid in the close of the nineteenth century, a period which saw beginning of a reaction in Bengal against the inferiority complex engendered by blind admiration of everything western, and the habit of feeling ashamed of Indians own ancient culture. A new class of educated men was arising, who questioned the theory of a divine dispensation, by which the British had come to India to correct the Indians tamentable failings, and to teach them the virtues by which alone they could improve themselves. Above all, the allegoriscat dramas philosophically expound man's relationship with nature, God and his fellowmen.

'Autumn Festival' is a prose verse play written for the Santiniketan pupils when they initiated a cycle of season festival. Some of the songs in Gitanjali were originally written for this drama. Tagore himself took one of the part in this, as he did in 'Atonement', the king of the Dark Chamber and the castle of conservatism,

This last, together with Autumn Festival, which it resembles in being a prose-verse, was specially popular and was performed again and again. It represents a scathing attack on barren dogma and empty ritual which use the name of orthodoxy to strangle the individual growth. As a play, it was highly



praised but was bitterly criticised for its religious thought and to these criticism Tagore made a sharp reaction in an essay entitled 'What Religion Mean'. He said "When people throw their humanity over-board, and in their insatiate greed for power and riches wallow in poverty, ignorance, vulgarity and bestiality, and call it religion-then I say that true religion means destroying that sort of religion".<sup>(2)</sup> He went on to declare that walls, however high and strong, can never keep a house safe, since they merely, provoke the neighbours to hatred and must one day collapse. Doors and windows must be kept open, the house must be heaven and an asylum, a place of peace and joy, not for just one single individual but for everyone.

It is illuminating in this context to read his speech 'East and West' which he delivered to the ordinary Brahma Samaj students in 1908. He said "India is a mighty stage, and Hindus are not the only actors on it. Let our Hindus never forget that in the Divine drama, some roles are to be played by them-which is why they have been called there. If we are not going to play our parts properly, we shall be turned off the stage, and the pride of our ancient culture, make us shun the rest of mankind; If we are to build walls around ourselves, dig ditches and carve out our own isolated little plot, then the Almighty will not fail to punish us. We shall be toppled from our pedestal to the same level as our neighbours or be caste away altogether. If we are fools enough to think that God helps no one but us; if in our lofty pride we keep our religion, our institutions, our

---

(2) G.D.Khanolkar - The Lute and the Plough - p-158.



temples just for ourselves; if we lock up our wisdom in our own little chamber; then there is no future for us, but to wait for death in the ghostly prison that our own hands have built." (3)

Tagore well knew that the caste of conservatism would earn him floods of abuse from those who claimed to be patriots and staunch Hindus. But truth was truth and no lover of it could sit quiet when he saw injustice, and inequality masquerading under the guise of religion. With the cry of the down-trodden ringing in his ears, Tagore felt he must declare war upon those who used the name of religion to cloak their injustice and evil dealings. His spirited challenge to his critics ended with this dear warnings. "That day shall surely come, when the insults you now heap on others shall recoil on your own heads." (4)

#### THE AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY OF TAGORE

According to Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore the function of art, is to remove the shadows which obscure the reality of the objective world as well as of the personality of man, and thereby to bring them together in intimate union. In his Bengali essays Tagore reminds us again and again that Bengali word for literature, Sahitya, comes from 'Sahit' and ethymologically means togetherness or intimacy.

In most of the aesthetic theories emotion occupy a very important place in Tagore's aesthetic philosophy, for they are

---

(3) G.D.Khanolkhar - The lute and the Plough - P-159.

(4) G.D.Khanolkhar - The Lute and the Plough - P-159.



the principal instruments of man's unification and harmonisation with the world.

The place of emotion in Tagore's philosophy or art raises another issue which deserves notice. If knowledge be broadly defined as awareness of ~~an~~ object, then Tagore certainly conceives aesthetic emotion as a form of knowledge.

Tagore adhered to academicism and had little interest in theorising on art at any rate he wrote and wrote extensively as he felt, or rather as his feeling led him to think.

On the other hand, a large part of Tagore's lectures was given to the elucidation of this point, that is, that in man's highest efforts and achievements - it is the eternal, ideal or universal man that seeks expression or which seeks to express. The universality that we find in the creation of art, in the discovery of truth in the good life was for Tagore, the manifestation of the eternal in man.

From the above it is known that our civilisation as well as nation takes its firm stand upon its basis of social co-operation and have faith in the human soul through the aesthetic philosophy of Tagore.





## CHAPTER - VIII

### CONCLUSION

#### Tagore - A matchless Educationist :-

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore devoted almost the whole of his life to the cause of education and distinguished himself as a prominent educationist of India. He provided inspiring leadership in the field of both educational theory and practice. He enriched the purpose and contents of education and intimately related it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people. He broke new grounds in the realm of education by experimenting in novel methods and techniques.

Tagore was an educationist of the highest order, like Pestalozzi, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekanand etc. and a born lover of children. He was a social reformer and practical idealist who had thought deeply on the problems of rural poverty and illiteracy, a patriot whose life extended beyond the confines of his own country and embraced the whole of humanity, a dreamer who cherished a vision, and a man of action who worked hard to bring the world a little nearer to the goal he had set his heart upon. He wanted to liberate the suffering and bewildered humanity from frustration, despondency, chaos and confusion.



### Some Essential Features of Tagore's Educational Thought

Tagore criticised the educational methods prevalent in those days, calling them imaginary, foreign, bookish and unsuitable. He wanted to base education on the Indian culture and has supported mother tongue as the medium of instruction. He laid special emphasis on music, dramatisation and art. In spite of supporting Indian thought in the field of education, he kept a humanistic outlook in mind and wanted to develop the international outlook. He taught the lesson of love and universality and admitted them as high educational values.

Tagore has been recognised as a great poet and philosopher. He is also regarded as Gurudeva. As Gurudeva he was very much dissatisfied with the system of education. He formulated certain principles of education and later on he applied them to his Santiniketan experiment. Thus, he was not only an educational theorist but also a practical educationist.

Commenting on Santiniketan in 1915 Earnest Rhys observed, "there is no doubt that the genius of Santiniketan is one of originality, enthusiasm, and freshness of experiment. He surcharged his ideas with such luster of his mighty personality that many of them have been shining brightly like luminous stars in the educational firmament, and he upheld the right causes with such persistence, passion, and power that many of them have become an integral part of the aims and achievements of Indian education at the present day, even though his name may not always be directly



remembered in their contexts". Commentators, however, are not wanting who have clearly stressed the revolutionary character of Tagore's contribution to education. "His sensitive spirit", writes Hirendranath Datta, "rebelled against this stupid, heartless system . . . . Santiniketan was born out of this rebellious spirit. Only a rebel can revolutionise things". Principal A.B. Dhruva a noted oriental scholar, observed that the aims and achievements of Visva-Bharati would open a new chapter in the history of educational revival in India.

Prof. Humayun Kabir has also stated in a recent speech that Tagore "revolutionised ideas of education without breaking with tradition". Maulana Azad's tribute is also no less eloquent. Santiniketan, according to him has been "from its inception a unique educational experiment". In the words of Mahatma Gandhi 'In Shantiniketan he has left a legacy to the whole world'. Today at the door step of the atomic age, the world has much to learn from him. Tagore brings a message of love, fullness of life and human loyalty. Being the only educational institution at the time of its foundation, which happily blended the traditions of the past of the country with the progressive elements in modern education. "It was Gurudev's achievements", he said, "that he almost single-handedly filled this void". It is difficult to point out any other single educator about whom so much can be honestly affirmed. All this by itself, to say the least, has been no mean contribution by a single person".



Gurudeva Tagore said "the teacher, I have found must bring to the child love and joy, for the true test of education is the happiness it gives to the individual, both the teacher & the taught. The growth of knowledge must be creative like that of the trees and the flowers. Mere heaping of information is no education. The teacher, then, must be alive; he could not depend upon the lifeless rules and dreary routine; he could not look to text books to inspire students or to inspire the mind, which should open its petals as the lotus does to the sunlight of truth. The teacher should drive everything home to the child's heart, so that the child could feel the glow within him to every new fact come to him like a revelation".

Tagore said "the old machinery of the educational department did not grant freedom for the acquisition of truth; but by a system of reproduction, examination and general drudgery, it led to the loss of individual initiative".

"My mission is to bring life into the school-room again, and we have now no ready-made machine. Our process of education, like life itself, is not finished, is not perfect and never will be. We must always be looking forward and be ready for the revelation".

Tagore is a supporter of full freedom of the child. He is of the opinion that after the formation of habits the child should not be made slave of those habits .





Tagore says that teaching should be animating. In order to bring life to teaching, the method should be based on the interest and emotions of child., there attention should be paid to emotions.

Teaching should be in rural situations of actual life. As far as possible education of History, Geography, Science, etc., should be given through direct experience, the true outlook in education can be developed by excursions and visits to various scenes.

Talking about aims of education Tagore gave importance to physical, mental, spiritual and moral and international outlook development as an aim of education.

He gave importance not only to the academic subjects like History, Science, Nature Study, Geography, Literature, etc., but also to gardening, regional study, laboratory work, drawing original composition, collection of museum, herbarium, drama, excursion and etc. From this point of view, the curriculum introduced in Tagore's institution has been "activity curriculum in a large measure".



Education for human re-generation :-

Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education aimed at developing a system of education for human re-generation. Man had been central to his thinking, philosophy, religion, literature, poetry, social activities and educational programmes. He was a humanist in the real sense of the term. Though not a rationalist, he believed in something higher than reason in man. He did not think science alone to be capable of delivering the human goods and therefore, wanted to synthesise it with vedanta. He was a nationalist yet transcended the barriers of narrow nationalism; in him the time where the two meet is invisible. As a matter of fact the concept of inter-nationalism finds meaning and clarity if viewed with reference to nationalism, and the two should be mutually inclusive. Short of this there shall always be gaps and contradictions.

Tagore's spirit of inter-nationalism is so much evident in his literary works, that enabled him edge past another great poet and visionary of his time, Mohammed Iqbal for the Nobel Prize for literature. A cursory comparison of the poems 'where the heart is fearless and the head is held high' and 'my country', the most beautiful land', may reveal the two facts of nationalism, but where as Tagore rises above himself, Iqbal is comfounded in the shackles of narrow and parochial nationalism. To Tagore the ultimate God was the cosmic man and the only aim of all the man's efforts was the realisation of this God. Human regeneration was the sole aim and the only ideal. His educational system was an attempt to achieve the virtues such as freedom,



purity, sympathy, perfection and world brother hood. He possessed a philosophy which possessed him; the end result was one of the biggest experiments ever conducted in the field of education on contemporary India.

In Tagore's essays, *Siksa-Samasya*, he writes, "If an ideal educational institution has to be founded, arrangement for it should be made away from human habitation, in solitude, under the open sky, on a wide field, amidst trees and plants".

"Tagore's philosophy of education", writes Dr. Mukherjee, is based on the fundamental postulates- which is a common-place but commonly ignored truism- that man has a spontaneous and irresistible attraction for nature and this attraction is even more powerful during the fresh years of childhood "when he feels naturally drawn in body and spirit towards the sky and the wind towards fields, trees and plants, from all of which he receives a call of invitation". Born into the world of Nature and the world of Man as the human child is, his attraction for both the world is, thus, elemental and vital".

"It was not the intention of the Creator", Tagore observed, "that we should be born amidst brick and mortar. Cities have been built to fulfil the practical needs of man; they are not our natural abodes. Our early years should, therefore, be spent as long as possible in natural surroundings. During the period, Nature will, as it were, take charge of human children and help them to grow in all respects as God wanted them to. They will have a free



direct, and joyful contact with Nature to their heart's content, run in the open play in the open and enjoy the nature".

According to Dr. Radha Krishnan- "Ravindranath did not claim to produce an original philosophy. His aim was not to analyse or speculate about the Indian tradition. He expressed it in his own vivid phrases and homely metaphors- and showed its relevance to modern life".

Any way, R.N. Tagore was a great educationist and a great philosopher of 20th century. His greatness lies in the fact that while condemning a dead, rigid and lifeless education organised by the alien British rule for Indians he formulated and planned a system of education on ancient philosophical and spiritual foundations for the good of Indian people. In this sense we can say in the words of H.B. Mukherjee- "Tagore was the greatest prophet of educational renaissance in modern India. He waged a ceaseless battle to uphold the highest educational ideal before the country, and conducted educational experiments as his own institution, which made them living symbols of what an ideal should be".

Tagore translated his dreams of ideal education into action by establishing institutions that educated people according to his plans. He sought to put his various ideals of education to work through various institutions at Santiniketan, Sriniketan and Vishva-Bharti.

Rabindranath Tagore wanted to control selfish greed through education because greed leads to the destruction of man and in turn





nation. By education the fullest growth and freedom of soul is possible. Object of education is to give man the unity of truth, and to establish a bond between the intellectual, physical and the spiritual life.

The education according to Tagore should be in full touch with our complete life, economical intellectual asthetic, social and spiritual aspects of life. Tagore said our educational institutions should be in the very heart of society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operations. For true-education is to realise at every step how trainings and knowledge have organic connections with surroundings. Tagore said that the great use of education is not merely to collect facts but to know man and make one-self known to man. It is the duty of every human being to master at least to some extent, not only the language of the intellect but also that of the personality which is the language of Art.

Tagore believes that the object of education is the freedom of mind which can only be achieved through the path of freedom-though freedom has its risk and responsibility as life itself has. Tagore said "I know it for certain, though most people seem to have forgotten it, that children are living beings- more living than grown up people, who have built their shells of habit around them, therefore, it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love. It must be an ashram where men have gathered for the highest end of life. In the peace of nature, where life



is not merely meditative but fully awake in its activities, where boy's mind are not being perpetually drilled into believing that the ideal of the self-idolatry of the nation is the truest ideal for them to accept, where they are 'bidden to realise man's world as God's Kingdom to whose citizenship they have to aspire; where the sunrise and sunset and the silent glory of stars are not daily ignored; where nature's festivities of flowers and fruit have then joyous recognition from man; and where the young and old, the teacher and the student, sit at the same table to partake of their daily food and the food of their eternal life"(1)

Rabindranath Tagore never forced discipline on children. He said we are born with that God given gift of taking delight in the world, but such delightful activity is fettered and imprisoned, stilled by a force called discipline which kills the sensitiveness of the child mind, the mind which is always on the alert, restless and eager to receive first hand knowledge from mother nature. This is the reason why he established his institution in a beautiful spot, far away from the town, where the children had the greatest freedom possible. Tagore said creating a free atmosphere is more important than the teaching of the classroom. Children in this type of atmosphere learn more easily and rapidly.

---

1. R.N. Tagore. Personality, P. 147.



According to Tagore teacher is more important than the method because education can be imparted only by a teacher and never by a method. Tagore quoted "man can learn only from a man. Just as a water tank can be filled only with water and fire can be kindled only with fire, life can be inspired only with life" (2)

Education aims at fulness and not specialisation of any single factor of human existence. It implies the harmonious relationship of man with man and man with nature. Nay, it even implies man's relationship with inanimate objects around him. And therefore, Tagore's attitude towards life was one of total acceptance.

Tagore's God is the universal man. It is more human and more close to reality. Man is evolving towards perfection, towards complete man who is yet to come. It is this all comprehensive vision of the complete man that he wanted to realise through education and to that end he endeavoured. Ignorance should give way to knowledge, indifference to understanding, narrowness to largeness of heart and selfish isolation to universal brother-hood irrespective of class, creed, race or religion. This stature stood out at the cross road of two ages-traditional and modern, of two worlds- the East and the West.



At last we can say that Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore has left a legacy to the whole nation, indeed to the whole world. Today at the door step of the atomic age, the world has much to learn from him. Tagore brings a message of peace, universal love, of fullness of life and human loyalty, so that a better world could be created out of the ashes of the old, a world -

'Where the mind is without fear and  
the head is held high,  
where knowledge is free,  
Where the world has not been broken  
into fragments by narrow domestic walls,  
Where words come out from the depth of truth,  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards  
perfection, where the clear streams of reason has not  
lost its way into the dreary desert and of dead habit,  
where the mind is led forward by thee into ever  
widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country  
awake'.

Thus Dr. Rabindranath Tagore by his varied educational activities contributed significantly to attune the education with the national aim and objectives and earned a mark as one of the distinguished educationist of India.

National Institute of Education	
Library & Documentation Unit (N.C.E.R.T.)	
Acc. No.	F165.36
Date	31.7.87

\*\*\*\*\*





## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Jasper, K.                      Man in the Modern Age: George  
Routledge and Sons, London, 1933.
- Lamont, C.                      The Philosophy of Humanism : Vision  
Press Limited, London, 1962.
- Schitter, F.C.S.                Humanism : McMillan, London, 1912.
- Tagore, R.N.                   Creative Unity: McMillan, London, 1925 .  
The Religion of Man: George Allen and  
Unwin 1932.  
Crisis in Civilisation: Visva-Bharati,  
1941.  
Reminiscences: McMillan, London, 1961.  
Towards Universal Man: Asia Publications,  
1961.  
Gitanjali: McMillan, London, 1962.  
Sadhna: McMillan, London, 1964.  
Our Universe: Jaico Publishing House,  
Bombay, 1958.  
Nationalism: New York: MacMillan, London,  
1950.
- P.R.Sarkar                      Human Society.
- R.S.Mani                        Educational Ideas and Ideals of Gandhi  
and Tagore : New Delhi: Society of  
India.



M.P.Singh	Crisis and Cure.
A.Bose	Later Poems of Tagore.
G.D.Khanolkar	The Lute and the plough of life of R.N.Tagore.
Radhakrishnan, S.	The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
Verma, V.P.	Studies in the Philosophy of Education Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agrawal, 1964.
Pandey, R.S.	Adunik Shiksha Ka Vikas.Delhi: Metropolitan Book Co., 1963.
Tagore, R.N.	Lectures and Addresses, London: Macmillan & Co. 1962.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
★